

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Face the Nation

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SUBJECT Full Text

GEORGE HERMAN: Admiral Turner, I suppose a great many operations from day to day in Africa, in Zaire, in the Congo, and other places, must occupy your attention. But your main job, it seems to me, your most pressing long-range interest, must be the intentions and the activities of the Soviet Union.

How do you feel they are building their military forces? To what end and with what in mind?

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: I believe the Soviets think in 19th Century power terms, Mr. Herman. I think they're trying to compensate for their other weaknesses, economic, ideological and political, by building a military force that they hope will weigh in the balance for them and give them for compensation for their other shortcomings.

In turn, I believe we must not let them take that advantage.

ANNOUNCER: From CBS News, Washington, a spontaneous and unrehearsed news interview on Face the Nation with the Director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Stansfield Turner. Admiral Turner will be questioned by CBS news correspondent Fred Graham; by Bob Woodward, reporter for The Washington Post; and by CBS news correspondent George Herman.

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HERMAN: Admiral Turner, you say you believe that the Soviet Union is trying to make up for these other things, the death of their ideology, their economic and technological backwardness. What do you mean "make up for it"? What do they intend

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to do with the dominant military power they're building up?

ADMIRAL TURNER: They hope that this power of military forces can be translated into political opportunity, to political leverage on the rest of the world, and therefore that they can, without necessarily having to go to war, gain an overall political advantage.

BOB WOODWARD: Admiral, when President Carter offered, and you accepted, the directorship of the CIA, what were his marching orders to you? What did he say he wanted done?

I understand that he, in effect, told you if you need to reinvent the wheel out at the CIA, go ahead. You've got a blank check to do whatever you think is necessary.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I don't think it's quite a blank check, Mr. Woodward. But the President was very generous in saying that he wanted me to take charge of the overall intelligence community and bring it together in one coordinated, efficient operation.

And I must remind you that he appointed me to two different posts: the Director of Central Intelligence, which coordinates all of the intelligence operations of our country, of which the CIA is about 15%; and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency itself.

FRED GRAHAM: Admiral, one of the flaps that you found yourself flung into when you were appointed to this job was, of course, the question of payments by the CIA to foreign leaders. Now, if the chief, or if an official of British intelligence, let's say -- we've been told that these were not improper or illegal. But if British intelligence sent a man every year with a satchel of money to give to President Carter, would you think that was also not improper or illegal?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Mr. Graham, I think we should put in perspective the fact that in the last 30 years the United States has given hundreds of billions of dollars of foreign aid to friends and allies around the world. An infinitesimal portion of that has been given in secret form. And that procedure of secret foreign aid, was actually started, with respect to the United States, on November 29th, 1776, when Benjamin Franklin went to Paris to arrange the secret delivery of aid from the King of France to George Washington.

GRAHAM: That doesn't really answer the question, does it, Admiral?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes, I think it does. I think it says that foreign aid, sometimes in secrecy, is a very common and a very legitimate tool of foreign policy.

GRAHAM: Well, now, the ques...

HERMAN: But when it comes back to us, as, for example, Korean foreign aid to the United States, to certain members of the Congress or wherever, we get very upset about it, as it not being a proper tool of policy.

ADMIRAL TURNER: The Secretary of State made a distinction on that publicly a few days ago, which I support entirely. That was a personal delivery of money, as opposed to a governmental exchange. And that is an entirely different matter. It's a matter of bribery versus a matter of aid and support to a friend.

WOODWARD: It's still a little confusing, because the Korean bribes were on behalf of the Korean Government, supposedly, also. And isn't it really sort of a question of whose ox is being gored? That if we can buy somebody abroad, okay, let's go ahead and doing, but we don't like it being done here.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it's just a matter of the propriety of the situation on both sides, and our proprieties are carefully reviewed by a very delicate oversight procedure in our country, and I think that gives you and the public an assurance that this money is not going to be employed as the Korean money apparently, or supposedly, has been employed against our country.

HERMAN: Now, what I derive from what you're saying, Admiral Turner, is that if it comes from the United States Government to an official secretly, an official of a foreign government, that is perfectly proper and there's no reason to stop it..

ADMIRAL TURNER: It depends on the purpose of that money, and I'm saying that the procedures by which we decide on this, which go through the President of the United States and which are reviewed by the committees of the Congress that are appropriately designated for this purpose, is carefully determined and does not involve things that are not proper.

GRAHAM: Well, sir, now, the payments to Hussein, we are told, were stopped when President Carter learned of it. Now, if that's true, and if it's proper, why were they stopped?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The President, when commenting on Mr. Woodward's release about the story of payments to the Kingdom of Jordan, made it clear that for any of us to comment on ongoing or current intelligence operations of our country would not be in the national interest.

GRAHAM: Are you saying it's not been stopped, sir?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I'm not saying it's not -- I'm not saying it's been stopped, I'm not saying it's not been stopped.

I'm neither denying or affirming your statement.

GRAHAM: But if it's been stopped, you could discuss it, could you not?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No. If I affirmed that it'd been stopped, it still was a secret operation and it could not be discussed without disclosing some of those details.

And I must make the statement at this point that the laws of this country charge the Director of Central Intelligence with the responsibility of protecting the sources and methods of collecting intelligence. And I'm as intent on fulfilling that portion of the law as I am on the many other strictures of the law that govern our intelligence operations.

I'll be as forthcoming as I possibly can today within that limit.

HERMAN: What help do you need to carry out that second function that you mentioned? Do you need new law, new protection to help you what you say you need to do -- that is, to stop publication of secrets?

ADMIRAL TURNER: There are a number of things that we can do to reduce the probability of unauthorized release of information. One is, of course, to restrict the number of people who obtain that information to the bare minimum to conduct the legitimate business of our country. Another is to avoid overclassification, so we don't have excessive amounts of information in the system that can be released. Another is to use the existing legislation, the Espionage Act, which has criminal sanctions against the release of classified information. Another is to use the administrative procedures that presently exist, to take action against people in the intelligence community who release information. And there are those who feel that we should either strengthen the espionage law or we should pass new administrative or civil sanctions.

But the end objective is to deter the release of information not to prosecute people.

HERMAN: Where do you stand on that question of strengthening the laws?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think we should look at all of these procedures, from curtailing the use of infor -- the distribution of information right through to studying whether new sanctions are needed in either criminal or civil methods.

GRAHAM: May I pin you down on that, sir? You omitted criminal sanctions in your first statement; now you've thrown it in here in the end.

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, I didn't omit them. They're in the espionage law, which I said, and I said that law may have to be strengthened.

GRAHAM: You said in your confirmation discussions that you favored adding criminal sanctions for CIA personnel who release -- who leak information that is stamped confidential. That seemed to be somewhat in conflict with the openness of the Carter policies during his campaign.

Do you still advocate that, what some people call, Official Secrets Act?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I do not advocate an Official Secrets Act in the British form, because that applies to you in the press as well as to us in the intelligence community, and that's another problem. And I said in my confirmation hearings I was amenable to studying amendments to the legislation which would have criminal sanctions. And I'm still amenable to that, but I'm also amenable to looking at whether any or all or a combination of these other methods would do the job.

What I'm concerned with is that if a member of the Department of Agriculture today releases information on crop futures that will help somebody make some money, he can go to jail; if a member of the intelligence community releases information vital to the security of this country, it's very difficult for us to find any way to discipline him.

WOODWARD: Admiral, it's a tradition in the Navy that after you take over a command, within a couple of weeks or 30 days, you sort of give a report to your boss what is the state of the command. Realizing you've only been there about 10 days, what is the state of the CIA? Is it good, bad? It's been a period of turmoil for that agency. How do you find it? How would you report to the President about it?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, I've been there 10 days, Mr. Woodward. It's a quick analysis. But I am impressed that after several years of considerable badgering in the press, considerable criticism, the morale, the attitude of the professionals, not only in the CIA, but in the entire intelligence community -- but I speak more for the CIA, because I've seen it more at firsthand in the last 10 days -- the morale is quite good. It's surprising that it's held up this well.

It's because, in my opinion, they are a very professional, dedicated group of men and women. And I believe that they have in the past and they will in the future respond to the directions that they're given.

WOODWARD: When you said "badgering by the press," do you

think that what the press has done with the CIA has been that, badgering, and has been essentially unfair?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think that some of it has been excessive, but I'm not questioning in any way the right of the press to make its criticisms, to make its comments. I would like to see some of it more objective and balanced, but that's all a matter of opinion.

HERMAN: Can we presume that when you took over this new command you started to inquire among your associates or the people you were going to command as to what problems might -- what bombshells might be lying in wait to burst over your head, as the new Director? Have you received a catalog of possible future problems?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I haven't asked that question in exactly those terms, but I have started a careful review of all of the covert and clandestine activities that are going on so that I am well aware of them, and that I am sure that in my own mind, in my own conscience, I also agree with the evaluation that has been made by many others in the oversight process, that there is nothing illegal or improper going on at this time.

HERMAN: Nothing you encountered surprised or dismayed you?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, sir.

GRAHAM: Admiral, you mentioned earlier your role in protecting sources of information, and methods. If there were to be a prosecution of congressmen or former congressmen here for accepting bribes from the Korean CIA, and we know, or we've been told, that there was some electronic surveillance by the CIA that could be used as evidence in that case, or could be subpoenaed by the defense, is there a danger here that a prosecution in the Korean bribery scandal could expose some CIA secrets?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Every time we're faced with a prosecution of that or any other sort that involves people who have dealt in the intelligence world, there comes a question of whether you have to reveal a great deal more classified, secret information that would hurt the national interest in order to carry out the prosecution.

It is my judgment, my decision as to whether that is the case. What I would have to do is present to the Attorney General the information and my evaluation of how vital it is to our national security, and he would have to determine whether or not it is worthy of prosecution.

WOODWARD: Admiral, Vice President Mondale has said, in a public interview, that some CIA operations have been stopped, some

of the covert activities. He didn't say what they were. Obviously, you're not going to be able to say what they are. But in a general way, can you address yourself, from the point of view of policy, your policy, the President's policy in terms of covert activities, what sort of things, maybe hypothetically, might have been stopped?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, what I would like to say is that the criteria that I would apply, and I'm quite sure is what the Vice President has been applying here, too, is a twofold standard. First, could this operation, that has been either proposed or being conducted in a covert manner, could it be done in an overt manner? Could we get almost as much effectiveness if we turned it around and into an overt operation? And secondly, if it cannot, we must then make a very careful risk assessment versus a benefits assessment. Do we really think that the risk, if it is exposed, is going to be worth it, because the return is going to be great enough?

WOODWARD: So, some things have been stopped.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes, a few have been stopped on those terms.

WOODWARD: Can you say how many and -- are they significant or are they sort of trivial?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think you're pushing me past what I believe is my legal responsibility here. I'm sorry.

HERMAN: Well, let me rescue you. Does the CIA know, do you, Admiral Turner, know whether there are or are not Cuban advisers and Cubans with the invading forces in Zaire?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The CIA has a good idea about that, and it's a difficult thing to pin down. But, as a matter of fact, on the way over here this morning, I received an updated report on that and our evaluation of it. It's a very delicate and difficult thing to pin down unless you have somebody right there on the ground. But we're keeping an eye on that very, very carefully.

HERMAN: Well, don't leave us hanging. What can you tell us from the report?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Nothing.

HERMAN: Nothing.

GRAHAM: Admiral...

HERMAN: How about the assassination in the Congo, the assassination of President Ngouabi?

ADMIRAL TURNER: We've been following that, of course. And

it appears a typical internal problem there. But again, I don't...

HERMAN: What does that mean?

ADMIRAL TURNER: That it's something that's handled by some people inside the Congo, not necessarily an external operation. But...

HERMAN: A large an powerful group, or a small group?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The evidence is very, very tenuous and slim at this point.

GRAHAM: Sir, a version of the question I asked earlier: Is it possible that the assassination inquiry in the House of Representatives could turn up information that might be compromising or embarrassing to the CIA, further information?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, it's quite possible that that investigation will require further intelligence information from our files, and we will be as cooperative as we can. But again, somebody will have to make, presumably higher authorities, the decision of whether or not it is worth the disclosure of this information in order to carry that investigation forward.

GRAHAM: Well, of what nature would that be? You obviously have something specific in mind.

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, I don't have anything specific in mind. I haven't really probed into that one in my 10 days thus far, Mr. Graham. But I'm waiting until I'm called upon for any information that that inquiry committee may require. And if so, we'll dig it out and find out what it is and evaluate the risk to the country of disclosing it, and pass that along.

WOODWARD: Sir, if a low-level CIA employee thinks he or she knows of some activity that is going on that shouldn't be going on, and they call your office, say, and speak to your executive assistant and say, "I'd like to see Admiral Turner," will you see that person?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I would certainly hope so. I don't know of every phone call that comes into my office, but my instructions would be to do that.

But let me elaborate on that, because it raises a very interesting point and one, I think, that's valuable for the people of this country to understand about our intelligence operations.

We have, under an executive order signed by President Ford just over a year ago, a definite procedure to be sure that that kind of an inquiry is not stopped. That person could, instead of coming

to me, go directly to what is known as an Intelligence Oversight Board -- it was just created a year ago, three very distinguished senior gentlemen -- and present that complaint or that problem to that board. That board would review it, make its recommendations, send it to the President of the United States.

This is also augmented by required periodic reports from the generals counsel and the inspectors general of all of the intelligence community.

So that that Oversight Board and its reports to the President are a very fine review, a very fine set of checks and balances to assure the people of this country that the intelligence community is being carefully monitored.

GRAHAM: Sir, have any agents done that, any CIA people gone to that board?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I have not any word of individuals doing it, but the periodic reports from the inspectors general and the generals counsel have gone to that board. And, in fact...

GRAHAM: Well, then, it may be that there is something about it that's -- either you have a very clean shop over there or it may be that there's something there that's intimidating to a lower-level person to go to a presidential board. Is that possible?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I don't believe that's the case. But I didn't say there have been none. I simply said, in 10 days, I haven't asked that question, and I just am unable, honestly, to answer it at this point.

GRAHAM: Sir, do you believe that there's a need for further legislation to make clear -- clearer that the CIA is not to be involved in such domestic spying as the opening of mail or other things that were revealed in the recent investigations?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it's a fine line between whether the executive order put out by the President or a piece of legislation by the Congress is needed. But in my opinion, at this stage, there is no question about the orders. We're carrying them out. We're not in the intelligence business inside the United States; that's the FBI's domain.

WOODWARD: Admiral, there's a lot of focus on who assists somebody at the top. The President's aides get a lot of publicity, and we know who they are. Who are your chief assistants at the CIA? Are they people you've known for a long time, that you've brought in? Just the two or three top people you deal with. Who are they and what is their background?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I have three deputies who report to me.

One is the deputy for the Central Intelligence Agency. His name is Mr. Henry Knothe (Z). He is a career CIA officer. I did not know him before I came into this association. Another is the deputy for what is known as the intelligence community, who helps coordinate this entire operation. He just happens to be another admiral of the Navy, Admiral Daniel Murphy, and I've known him for many years and have a close personal association. The third is a deputy for what is known as national intelligence estimates, and here I have just about completed negotiations with a distinguished academician to come and join me here, a man I've worked with in the past and who has a very fine record, both in the government and in academia, and who will take that.

HERMAN: Who is that?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I'm not quite ready to announce that at this time, but I think you'll be very pleased with him when I do.

HERMAN: Reviewing my notes here, I find a little bit of a loose end. You said early on in the program that the Soviet Union is trying to make up for its deficiencies by military development aimed at becoming the dominant world power.

Are they succeeding? Will they be the dominant world power, and when?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I don't think so, because, among other things, I think the will and the resolve of the people of the United States is too great to permit that.

HERMAN: But I think I have to ask: Is the situation now developing agreeably to you? Are you pleased with the way the balance of power is now developing?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think that...

HERMAN: Or are you talking about future changes?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think that the military balance is gradually eroding towards the Soviet side. I think that we can and will be able to redress that, because, again, I believe the people of the United States are perceiving this need.

HERMAN: When you say redress it, are you talking about a massive new military program on our part?

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, I don't think that's going to be necessary.

HERMAN: What is?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think it's going to be necessary that

we put enough resources and enough attention, enough interest into this to realize where we have to strengthen ourselves. But it isn't only in the military sphere. We must continue to have a strong economic position for this country. And, parochially, I must say, we must continue to have a strong intelligence function. And I'm persuaded that we can have it because we have the basic foundation in fine men and women in your intelligence community who are dedicated to that purpose.

HERMAN: You put that in the future, "we can have it." Do we now now have it?

ADMIRAL TURNER: We do have it now, yes.

GRAHAM: Are any of them reporters?

ADMIRAL TURNER: There are no American newsmen of any kind on the payroll of the intelligence community of your country, and there will not be.

WOODWARD: Are you going to monitor carefully the strategic arms limitation talks and see what we do and...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes, very closely. And my job, as I see it, is to advise whether we can verify what is agreed. And that is one of the greatest contributions we're going to make, is the ingenuity of the intelligence community in being able to let us go ahead with arms negotiations.

HERMAN: Thank you very much, Admiral Turner, for being our guest on Face the Nation.